

MAYOR'S COMMITTEE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

MAY 21, 2007

MINUTES – Meeting in Newton City Hall – Cafeteria

PRESENT: Doug Sweet (Acting Chair), Jane Brown, Lucie Chansky, Herb Cole, Jini Fairley, Linda Hiller, Rosemary Larking, Barbara Lischinsky, Girard Plante, Janna Zwerner

REGRETS: Rob Caruso, Jason Rosenberg,

STAFF: Beverly Droz, Lowell Haynes

GUESTS: Heather Platt (Carroll Center for the Blind)

The meeting was called to order at 6:35 pm and was chaired by Douglas Sweet, Acting Chairperson.

Minutes of 4/23/07 were accepted with the correction that Girard had referred to a misplaced HP sign near Turtle Lane.

OLD BUSINESS:

Citizen's Bank on Centre St.

Rosemary reported tables had been removed so now there are only high counters and the one low counter. Lowell observed that they don't regularly staff the lower counter. Doug will contact the bank about it. Rosemary also added that there is no automatic door opener and the doors are too heavy for her to open. Lowell reported that he's requested HP space be moved to the front street entrance with a curb cut.

Café St. Petersburg (53-57 Union Street):

Lucie is troubled by the fact that we pushed the item and now the restaurant may go out of business. Lowell's impression was that they were involved with the AAB before we contacted them about having an accessible entry. Lucie said many businesses are not in compliance and we have to be fair and not selective. Bev reminded members that this case has been ongoing for a while and Jason has been reviewing it; he believed that there were problems getting the landlord to take on some of the responsibility. Bev has been copying all their correspondence to him. Members said they do not feel like were selective since AAB was already involved.

Discussion of HP parking and blocked egress at other locations:

There was a discussion of handicap parking and blocked egress issues at other businesses. Lowell said it is Inspectional Services responsibility to be sure HP spaces follow the law. Janna thought MCPD sent letters to violators. We did send letters to the Nonantum businesses about egress but we don't typically send notice. Other businesses and parking areas were brought up. Some businesses have doors that open up in a way that's difficult for a wheel chair to enter. Doug agrees that we sometimes notify businesses but we are not an enforcement agency. Rosemary suggested having an Excel tracking sheet. Janna asked why we don't send letters to violators and copy Inspectional Services. Doug asked who would do it. It was suggested that Bev take on the project of letter writing and tracking. Bev said she'd be happy to track the letters sent out, but didn't have the time to write them.

Heather brought up the crossing at Herrick Rd and Union St. They have experienced delivery vehicles parking in curb cut areas making access difficult. There was further discussion of the area, curb cuts, fading cross walk lines etc. Heather had drafted letter to the Police Chief and inquired if MCPD would send a cover letter. Doug said the letters should be sent separately. There was discussion about the letter also including other locations and about contacting the Newton TAB.

Janna made a motion that we have a process of writing letters and then, if there's no response, taking the

next step of writing a 2nd letter.

There was discussion, including Lucie suggesting that we send the Fire Department a letter because their trucks block intersections at times when there is no emergency. Doug said he would draft a letter to Veterans Taxi, to the Police Chief, and to the Fire Chief. Barbara seconded the motion that we follow this project. The motion passed.

Doug doesn't want to cite only one or two locations; to be fair we need to address various sites. Doug will write the letters and send them to Bev to put on MCPD letterhead and mail out.

There was further discussion about trucks, such as the landscaping trucks, that block driveways and curb cuts. Doug said he has called the Police and they have responded to the locations and ticketed the offenders.

Janna reported she believes there's a problem at Taft St where at least 3 new sidewalks are being built and there are no curb cuts. Doug asked if there were previous curb cuts. There was discussion as to when curb cuts have to be added. The project of pouring the cement to repair sidewalks broken by tree roots is underway. Lowell will contact DPW to see what's happening.

CDBG ACCESS PROJECTS REPORT for May by Lowell

This report was submitted to MCPD by email before this meeting for their review. Per usual it is copied here within the minutes. Any discussion that took place at the meeting, other than Lowell's reading of the report, is noted below each appropriate bullet item and will start with the words "It was noted".

- **Police Headquarters Annex Access Ramp** (Project CD0203A. Expended, \$245,218; Budget balance, \$7,631; Building Dept. budget, \$66,600) – The concrete ramp is completed. We are waiting for a sub-contractor to make some minor adjustments to the handrails. The project will be completed soon. (*Expected Date of Completion: June 2007*)

It was noted that Lowell said the project is essentially done; they just have to finish bending the railings.

- **Accessible Pedestrian Signals** (Project CD0703C. Expended, \$25,015; Budget balance: \$14,386) – In keeping with the vote of the Committee, we have ordered the installation of APS-10 audible pedestrian signals at the intersections of Walnut and Cabot Streets, Beacon and Chestnut Streets, and Adams and Watertown Streets. I estimate hardware costs for these three intersections at \$1,400. We have also ordered Polara Navigator signals at Washington Street and Commonwealth Avenue. I estimate hardware costs for this intersection at \$9,000. We are attempting to communicate with the Traffic Engineer to improve the pedestrian crossing at Centre Street @ Centre Ave. Our hope is to have independent crossing signals for the two streets and straighten the crosswalk across Centre Street. We've requested regular APS-10 pedestrian signals, but this intersection would be an excellent location for the Polara Navigator signals because of ambient sound control and beaconing capabilities. I estimate the hardware cost for this intersection between \$1,400 and \$3,000. (*EDC: fall 2007*).

It was noted that because there are twelve pedestrian signals at Washington St. and Commonwealth Avenue; the cost would be \$9000 as noted.

Further discussion about Washington and Commonwealth Ave:

Lowell handed out a map of the intersection. Most pedestrian buttons are located near the curb cut. Some of the curb cuts are in need of repair. Janna asked if the pedestrian button can be placed on the street light pole across from the Fire Station. Lowell will find out.

Heather brought up that a cut-through is more difficult for visually impaired than ramps up to and down from the medians. Lowell said many cut-throughs are in slim islands where you can't create a ramp. It was suggested adding truncated domes to identify where the median starts and stops. It would be the domes

impressed into the cement. There was further discussion about the lights and the length of walk phases in the APS-10 and Polara signals.

Lowell said on Washington and Commonwealth Avenues they could recommend concurrent crossing so that all traffic would not have to be stopped. There was further discussion about what would happen when people crossed in different directions. Lowell emphasized there would be twelve buttons and it could be synchronized.

Lowell said there's \$5427.46 left from the Education Center's budget and he asked that it be transferred to the APS budget. Motion was moved and approved by the Committee.

○ **Wellington Park Access** (Project CD0303C. Expended, \$0; Budget balance, \$10,000) – No change since last report. Our project is an asphalt walkway to provide an accessible route from the park entrance to some benches and to the basketball and tennis courts. DPW will do the work. The work has been delayed because of disagreement among residents regarding the location of additional walkways through the park that are to be funded by the City's CPA budget. (EDC: fall 2007)
It was noted that it probably won't be completed until this fall. There was discussion about the benches, what kind they are and if they had been purchased. Lowell will inquire about it.

○ **Ware's Cove Accessible Connector Path** (Project CD0403A. Expended, \$8,562; Budget balance, \$10,178) – No change since last report. Construction is almost completed on the accessible path that begins at the field house, passes east of the children's play area, and connects with the accessible path that begins north of the playground and runs to the pump house on the way to Purgatory Cove. A few locations in the path need minor improvements and these will be made during the summer. (EDC: July 2007)

○ **Benches** (Project CD0403C. Expended, \$0; Budget balance, \$3,000) – No change since last report. The current budget will be limited to installation of benches at Wellington Park when our construction of walkways in the park is completed. (EDC: fall 2007)

○ **Curb Cuts** (Projects CD0703D and CD0803G. Expended, \$37,482; Budget balance: \$156,747) – The Dept. of Public Works will hire a dedicated crew in July for CDBG projects, primarily curb cuts. We have submitted specific requests for 63 curb cuts. Many of the locations are on Woodland Road from Hancock Street to Windermere Road. We are still expanding our list of curb cuts to be done in 2007. *Mayor's Committee members are still encouraged to report priority locations for needed curb cuts. (Expected Date of Completion: None. On-going work.)*

○ **Public Facilities and Parks Access** (Project CD0703A. Expended, \$0; Budget balance, \$67,293) – No change since last report. The first specific project under this budget is the construction of the accessible walkway from the Mason-Rice School parking lot to the planned accessible play area within the Newton Centre Playground. The project will be managed by the Department of Parks and Recreation and carried out by the Department of Public Works. Work should begin in July. The second part of this project is the re-construction of two sets of stairs in Burr Park by the Department of Public Works and the installation of railings on all three sets of stairs in the park. The work at Burr Park should be completed by mid-June. (EDC: October 2007)

Request for Architectural Access Improvements:

Lowell handed out copies of the Request for Architectural Access Improvements and Application which he had emailed out previously. He'll delete the reference that up to \$100,000 will be available in FY08. This request will be sent to Newton Agencies and City Departments. Lowell requested feed back, if any.

Lowell brought up the Waban Library which houses the Newton Food Pantry. There was discussion about the library becoming more accessible, and about the needs of people who access the Food Pantry. Lowell will look into it.

Jini suggested it would be helpful to have a restaurant guide that describes how accessible each restaurant is. For example, you'd have to climb three stairs to Business X. She says the Watertown Disabilities Commission does such a book. Lowell said we had such a resource in the 1970's and he brought out a remaining copy from his office, "Access to Newton", dated 1978.

Barbara brought up Cold Springs Park. It is difficult to traverse. Lowell had proposed a connecting path for the tennis courts and athletic field, parking lot etc. There are problems with the gradation in terms of putting a path through the park. Since it is such a big park, it would be very expensive. An asphalt path would incur opposition from the residents. Lowell will bring the Cold Springs Park plan to next meeting.

Linda asked if anything can be done to make Crystal Lake more accessible, now that the City has brought the Hannon property.

NEW BUSINESS:

HP Spaces at Albemarle Field:

Lowell introduced an item petitioned by Alderman Marcia Johnson to install two HP spaces which are part of the original design/plan for the Community Classroom at Albemarle Field. The spaces would be directly in front of the gazebo. Lowell described the area between the Horace Mann School and the Gath Pool. There was discussion as to whether it's needed, that there would be curb cuts needed and why the spaces are needed. Girard noted that she did not provide a map with her request. Committee members voice many more questions. Girard requested that Lowell contact Alderman Johnson and ask if she can provide more information by appearing before the Committee.

Boston Globe article: Blind Siding

Jane brought up the article, Blind Siding (4/22/07 Boston Globe). Perkins School for the Blind is facing serious state budget cuts. The article had been emailed to the Committee. Jane urged the MCPD to advocate. Lucie and Jini said that unfortunately budget cuts are happening to all areas of disabilities. There was discussion about the need to advocate to our elected officials.

New member for MCPD:

Doug reported he and Jason talked and they would like to recommend Jeff Hutter as an Associate member and Heather Platt as an Advisory member. Girard made a motion to nominate both as described. The motion passed unanimously. Bev will follow-up with appointment letters to the Mayor.

Other Announcements:

- Lucie reported it was recently ruled by the Supreme Court that parents can take their special education cases to court without an attorney.
- Doug reported that he and Jason spoke late this afternoon. Jason has notified the Mayor that he would like to be a Committee member and step down as Chair. Jason first became chair in 1979. He'd like to focus his time on making the Committee a Commission.
- The US Blind Championship Walk/Run will be held here in Boston on June 2. Literature was passed around. The walk benefits the blind and visually impaired. Barbara and Jini have participated and won money.

Motion to adjourn at 9:15 pm. The next meeting will be June 18 at 6:30pm in the cafeteria.